

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 30, 2007

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 18: Consideration of resolution authorizing expenditure from the Runyon Canyon Trust Fund for acquisition of APNs 5571-025-042 and 5571-026-007 adjacent to Runyon Canyon Park, Hollywood.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing the release of funds from the Runyon Canyon Trust Fund for the acquisition of APNs 5571-025-042 and 5571-026-007 adjacent to Runyon Canyon Park in the eastern Santa Monica Mountains.

Legislative Authority: Section 33211(c) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: One hundred and thirty-five acre Runyon Canyon Park was acquired by the City of Los Angeles in 1984 with a grant from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy). The actual acquisition price turned out to be less than the grant amount. The remaining funds were put into the Runyon Canyon Trust Fund in 1986 to be administered by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and the Conservancy. The Runyon Canyon Trust Fund has a twisty history from that point on, and both the Conservancy and the City staffs do not have full mastery over all of its aspects. The fund has approximately \$650,000 remaining. The structure of the funds usage requires the Conservancy to take action for the release of monies. Discussion about the release of funds last came before the Conservancy in January 2004 regarding use of the funds for a parking lot at the southern end of the park. No action was taken.

The 4th District Council office and Runyon Canyon Park advocates have approached staff about using the remaining funds to acquire two parcels next to the park. As shown on the attached aerial photographs, the subject properties are located along the northern boundary of Runyon Canyon Park and in close proximity to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's Trebek Open Space in Nichols Canyon. The properties include an important hiking trail that extends into City of Los Angeles-owned Runyon Canyon Park in two places. The property also contains important viewshed for both the park and the Curson Canyon watershed. Further development of the property would result in unavoidable significant adverse visual impacts to the Runyon Canyon Park viewshed.

A large house (10,000 square feet) has been under construction in phases on APN 5571-026-007 (4.29 acres) since the mid-1990s. Both properties are involved in a bankruptcy proceeding that is too complex to address in this report. In any case, the timing of the bankruptcy proceedings requires that the City make an offer in short order. The City of Los Angeles, via the 4th Council District Office, is spearheading the acquisition of the property. The property would be owned and managed by the City's Department of Recreation and Parks. The City has also requested that the MRCA contribute some funds from the Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1. The proposed acquisition area would exclude the house and some of the surrounding land. One of the attached figures shows the excluded house and lot area as "Parcel B". The acquisition would have to include an adequate trail easement through or around Parcel B. The larger parcel (APN 5571-025-042) is 17.04 acres.

The attached resolution specifies that the Conservancy's action for the release of the funds is for the purposed of, and only for the purpose of, the acquisition of APNs 5571-025-042 and 5571-026-007 adjacent to Runyon Canyon Park. The funding should not go into the City's General Fund.